Magyars in America

by

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Hungarian Reformed Churches in America

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MAGYARS IN AMERICA

According to common knowledge Columbus discovered America in 1492. The fact is, however, that contacts between Europe and America were far older. In about 900 A.D. the Vikings, came to America by way of Greenland. The leader of the expedition was Leif Ericson. One of his men was known as Tyrker. This Tyrker (Turk) was a Hungarian and not a Norman. This is deduced from the fact that the Hungarians had close contacts with the Normans in the 9th and 10th centuries. Further, the European peoples, especially the Greeks, referred to the Hungarians as Turks. The crown of Géza II bears the following inscription: "Gejza rex Turcorum." The expedition of Leif Ericson landed in an eastern area of Northern America where there were grapes. Tyrker made this discovery and in his agitation, as the Icelandic sagas report, he spoke in a language which the Normans didn't know. The German scholars claim that Tyrker was a German, but the Normans would have known something of the ancient German language. When they asked Tyrker why he was so happy, he replied that he was from a country where grapes grow in abundance. Hungary was always famous for its wines. Thus, from a Hungarian point of view, it is unquestionably true that this Tyrker was Hungarian, the first of our nation who visited America.

There were no Hungarians among Columbus' men, but in 1583, when the present United States didn't even exist, an outstanding scholar and poet was here, Stephen Parmenius Budai, who studied in Oxford and was most likely a Reformed minister. Budai was a good friend of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, a confidant of Queen Elizabeth, and served as chronicler of the Gilbert expedition. They reached Newfoundland and Parmenius' only letter from there to London survives. Unfortunately Parmenius never returned to Europe. On the way back the expedition foundered in a storm and the ship bearing Parmenius sank.

The first important English settlement in North America was in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Its chief founder was Captain John Smith who had fought against the Turks in 1600 and gained recognition from Sigismund Bátori, then ruler of Transylvania. Two Hungarians are among the first settlers at Jamestown. One was named Görgényi (Gurganey) and the other was called Unger, or Hungarian.

The Mayflower brought the Pilgrim fathers to America in 1620. There were no Hungarians among them, but in 1625 Daniel Sövényfalvi, Gábor Bethlen's legate to London, visited the new colony.

Philadelphia was founded by Quakers in 1683. There were two Hungarians among the very first settlers. The first was János Kelp,

son of a Transylvanian Saxon Lutheran minister, who died in Philadelphia in 1708. The other was Isaac Sárosy, who lived in Philadelphia from 1695 to 1697.

Large scale German immigration into Pennsylvania began in the middle of the 18th century. It is interesting to note that Germans from the same province settled in Hungary. We occasionally find Hungarian names among the immigrants to Pennsylvania. We also find Hungarians across the Mississippi, especially in what is now known as California, Arizona and New Mexico. Hungarian Jesuit priests built missions and converted the Indians. Among them were Baron Ferenc Orban, Nándor Konschak and others.

It was thus inevitable that Hungarians took part in the Revolutionary War. Most notable was Michael Kováts Fabrici. Born in Karcag and a student at Debrecen, he served in the Prussian army and in 1778 entered Washington's forces. With Pulaski he organized the American cavalry. He fell on May 11, 1779, as a Colonel, in the defense of Charleston, South Carolina. John Polarecki and Ferenc Benyovszky also served in the colonial army. We also know that among LaFayette's cavalry of foreign legionaires there were many Hungarian hussars, for a number of Hungarian hussar regiments then served in France.

At the end of the 18th century another interesting Hungarian also visited North America. Count Maurice Benyovszky was one of the most adventurous Hungarians, who turned up everywhere from Kamchatka to Madagascar.

With the advent of the 19th century Hungarain activities become more general. In 1831 Alexander Farkas Boloni traveled here. He was secretary to Count Ferenc Beldy, a Transylvanian magnate. At about the same time Nicholas Lenau, German poet who was born in Hungary also visited America. In 1835 Boloni published a book about his travels. It first appeared in Kolozsvár and was titled: "Travels in North America." For our purpose the most important part of the book deals with Boloni's contacts with Hungarians here in America. He mentions a Mr. King of Baltimore, who was born in Olasz-Liszka and was originally known as Király. He had been here so long that he had almost completely forgotten the Hungarian language. Some five or six additional Hungarians are mentioned, among them Indian traders.

When news of Kossuth's battle against the Hapsburgs in 1848 reached America the Hungarians of New York City, among them one Gábor Naphegyi, formed an organization to agitate for a free Hungary.

The first refugees of the Hungarian revolution were among those who capitulated at Komárom. John Prágai and Cornelius Fornet settled in Boston in December of 1849 and the first book about the revolution in English was written by John Prágai in

1850. The translation was prepared by Dr. Charles Krajtsir who had taken part in the Polish revolution of 1830 and came to America with Polish refugees in 1831. He was the first Hungarian under whose name a book appeared in America.

The people of North America followed the course of the Hungarian revolution wih great interest and complete agreement. The American government was overly cautious and all it did was to send an observer who never got past Vienna.

The first large scale immigration took place after the failure of the Hungarian revolution. When Louis Kossuth was freed from Turkish internment by United States intervention, he was greeted with such enthusiasm by the American people upon his arrival in New York City on December 6, 1851, that the demonstration even surpassed that given to LaFayette. There were at the time about 1,500 Hungarians in the United States. Only in 1956 did the Hungarian name and cause become as famous as at the time of Kossuth's visit. Streets, villages and even counties were named after Kossuth and people rejoiced to get near him. Following LaFayette he was the first foreigner to address Congress. It was not his fault that he was unable to lead America to intervene. The past century has justified his stand. His vision and prophecies have been startingly fulfilled in our time. In May of 1852, bearing an alias and quite disillusioned, he returned to Europe. He was not disappointed in the American people, it stuck by him, but its government proved to be as shortsighted then as it is now.

The number of Hungarian Americans continued to grow and by the time of the Civil War in 1861 they numbered some 4,000 people. There were, in the meantime, many attempts to root Hungarian life on American soil. For example Gedeon Ács, a former Reformed chaplain, organized a congregation in New York City in 1851, but it only lasted for six months. In 1853 Charles Kornish began the first Hungarian language newspaper in New York, titled: "Hungarian Exiles' Journal." It only lasted a few issues. The first attempt to organize a Hungarian fraternal (sick benefit) society also took place in 1851.

Iowa became a state in 1851. In its climate similar to the Hungarian lowland, it would have awaited them with open arms. There were attempts made to establish Hungarian settlements, but only one succeeded, and for a short time at that: New Buda. It appeared on the maps of the time and its first post master was a Hungarian, László Ujházi, former civil-commandant of the city of Komárom. Among the writers who took part in the Hungarian War of Independence Frederick Kerényi landed in America and died somewhere in Texas.

Among the many rootless Hungarians in America there was one who actually made a career for himself, Ágoston Haraszty. He

arrived in America in 1840 with his family and a cousin named Charles Halász. Together with an English friend he founded a city in Wisconsin, now known as Sauk City. In the 50's Haraszty lived in California where he laid the foundations of vine culture. According to our knowledge he was the only Hungarian who served as a delegate at the time of the founding of California.

The Civil War began with the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. According to Béla Estvan's book, "War Pictures from the South", which appeared in 1863, while he was serving as a cavalry Colonel with the Confederate army he planned the siege of Sumter. If this can be believed this doubtful honor belongs to the Hungarians. Hungarian sympathy was naturally with Lincoln and as we know largely upon the basis of Edmund Vasváry's research, some 800 of the 4,000 Hungarians in America took part in the five year long war. There were only about a dozen on the Confederate side. Since the great majority of Hungarians who emigrated after 1848 were drawn from the intelligencia, it is not surprising to find that more than a hundred served as officers, ten as generals. One, Julius Szamvald Stahel received the highest military decoration, the Congressional Medal of Honor. Many of the officers were colonels. The first successful Northern battle was won by Charles Zagonyi, who had been a cavalry officer in 1848. Thus far we know that nine of the Hungarians died on the field of battle.

Upon the completion of the Civil War the reconstruction of the United States and its industrial expansion began. The mines and mills cried for men; the Canandian, American and Argentine wheat production crushed the price of wheat in Europe; African and American mines made it economically unfeasible for Hungarian mines to produce; the uncounted sheep of Australia depressed wool prices everywhere in Europe. The result was increased pressure for emigration from Hungary, now because of economic and not political reasons. It is worthy of note that this new emigration began in the counties of Abauj and Moson. This was due to the influence of the Germans. Through them the Hungarians gained encouragement to emigrate. The first notable settlements, aside New York where Hungarian Jews moved in large numbers, were in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania. In 1880 the Hungarians of Hazelton had their first sick benefit society, the ancestor of the later Verhovay Association. With the development of the steel industry the bituminous fields boomed. Thus, in the middle of the 1880's, Hungarians moved to the minefields of western Pennsylvania.

Hungarian immigration continued unabated from 1880 to 1914, and at least half a million whose mother tongue was Hungarian came to America. Their place of settlement could be described as a triangle, whose three points were Buffalo, Chicago and Pocahantas, Virginia. Settlements were begun along the many Eastern rivers,

the Hudson, Delaware, Lehigh, Mahoning, Allegheny and Ohio. Many others settled on the banks of the Great Lakes.

Unlike the English, Germans and Irish, the Hungarians looked upon their stay in America as temporary in nature. Their one goal was to save enough money to pay off their debts in the homeland and perhaps buy some land there. Until the 1920's a constant stream of immigrants went back and forth between the two nations. There were many who made the trip a dozen times. Once they tried American life it was extremely difficult to reenter the life of the European village community. Thus, in spite of the great love of their ancestral land, the great majority of Hungarians remained here in America.

The mass immigration which was completely without direction from a religious point of view, forced the growing Hungarian population to organize. The first such acts took place in the realm of social aid. Neither the employers nor the government were concerned with the fate of workers or their families in the event of illness, accident or death. And since fatal accidents were common in the mines it is natural that miners felt the greatest need for help. The first continuous and national Hungarian insurance organization was the Verhovay, which was founded by miners in Hazelton in 1886. This was followed by the Rákóczi Association of Bridgeport in 1888. These two national organizations recently united to form the William Penn Fraternal Association.

The most active religious group among the immigrant Hungarians was the Reformed element. It had attempted to form a congregation in New York City in 1851. In 1879 a united effort was begun with Slovak Reformed folk in Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania. Another attempt was made in New York City in 1884, but it also failed. The earliest congregation which is still in existence was organized in Pittsburgh in 1890. Another was formed in Cleveland in 1891, and since then 120 congregations were established.

Fraternal organization among the Reformed people began in 1896 when the present Hungarian Reformed Federation of America was organized with $272 in operating capital. The organization now numbers 40,000 members and has $10,000,000 in assets. Its headquarters, the "Kossuth House", is located in Washington, D. C. The Reformed people were the first to set up a charitable institution, the "Bethlen Home", which was located in Ligonier, Pa., in 1921 and now cares for 30 orphans and 50 elderly Hungarian folk.

The fourth great insurance organization is the Bridgeport Federation, now known as the "American Life Insurance Company." The three great Hungarian organizations now number nearly 150,000 members and have total assets of $45,000,000.

There are at the present time some 120 Reformed congregations, 80 Roman Catholic parishes, the first of which was organized in

1892. There are also 10 Lutheran congregations, 10 Greek Catholic parishes and about 20 Baptist ongregations. The 250 Hungarian congregations serve a constituency of 175,000 people and their properties are worth $20,000,000.

The Hungarian press was of much help in the time of organization. We have already mentioned the very first Hungarian newspaper in America, "The Hungarian Exiles' Journal." The second try, "Hungarian America", took place in 1879. It also enjoyed only a brief life. The paper which survived for many years was the "American Hungarian National Guard" which was edited by Gustav Erdélyi. The present day "Liberty" was organized in Cleveland in 1891 and in 1900 the "American Hungarian People's Voice" was established in New York City. Church press was first represented by the Reformed faith which began publication of the "Sentinel" in 1895. It was followed by the "Reformed Journal" in 1900 and the "Magyar Church" in 1922. The latter two survive to this time.

In the golden age of Hungarian press in America there were three dailies, more than fifty weeklies and three or four monthly periodicals. Today, in 1960 there are only two dailies left (since they have the same publisher even the texts are practically identical), at most 25 to 30 weeklies and three monthlies to serve a possible constituency of nearly 800,000 people, if the second generation is included. Of the nearly one million people of Hungarian descent there are some 400,000 who speak Hungarian more fluently than English.

Hungarian American life was primarily influenced by two great world events. The first was the World War, 1914 to 1918, the tragic conclusion of which broke Hungarians here physically from the homeland, for it made any return to the partitioned land impossible. Hungarians took part in this conflict as in the past. Gábor Korponai served in the Mexican War of 1848, and an imposing array participated in the Civil War. They also were in the Spanish-American War and from five to six thousand Hungarians served in the American forces during the First World War.

The Second World War broke the old immigrants from their homeland spiritually too, but their love for the people remained. Some 75,000 Hungarian Americans served in the Second War and hundreds gave their lives in the conflict.

The unavoidable assimilation was delayed by two later emigrations. The first was the refugees of 1945, made up almost completely of the old Hungarian middle class, from the ranks of the old intelligencia. From 1948 to 1952 there were over 18,000 persons in this group.

The second emigration, akin to that of 1848, was made up of the refugees of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Nothing ever

had as powerful an effect on the Hungarians of America than this revolution, which built love of their nation in even the most forelorn individuals. The future integration of members from both these new migrations into Hungarian American life is a question for time to tell. It is certain that the history of Hungarians in America completely justifies the conclusion of Nicholas Zrinyi II, that; "We are not inferior to any nation."

From the very beginning Hungarians in America were characterized by mobility, love of work and outstanding accomplishments in the intellectual realm. Volumes can be written about Hungarian successes, especially of Hungarian experts in science, industry, commerce and trade. The great reserve of strength for Hungarians in Europe is made up of American Hungarians who were not placed here by God through error. If this people remans true to its mission, it shall have not lived in vain. That unifying body, which holds all Hungarian American activities together, is the more than fifty year old Hungarian American Federation, which has its headquarters in Washington, D. C.

Alexander Daroczy

THE HUNGARIAN REFORMED CHURCHES IN AMERICA

Stephanus Parmenius Budaeus was the first Hungarian ever to set foot on the soil of the New World: America. He was a humanist Protestant scholar, perhaps a minister, who studied in Oxford England, when Sir Humphry Gilbert Hamilton organized an expedition to Newfoundland in 1583. It is very little, that we know about this man, but he must have been a Hungarian, for Captain Haie's report remained which said: "was drowned a learned man, a Hungarian, born in the city of Buda called thereof Budaeus who in piety and zeal to good attempts, adventured in this action, minding to record in the Latin tongue the "gesta" and things worthy of remembrance happenings in this discovery, to the honor of our nation."

His learning and talents must have attracted Sir Humphry Gilbert Hamilton's attention, because the choice of selecting a historian for this expedition fell on him. The four ships sailed on July 11th 1583 and reached Newfoundland 2 months later. Three ships started back to England to make their report and obtain supplies, but two of them with Stephen Parmenius of Buda and Sir Humphry Gilbert Hamilton on board were lost in a storm. All we know about him is recorded by Richard Hacluyt in his work on English Discoveries and Travels.

II.

Since the discovery of America, centuries have passed and hundreds of thousands of people arrived on the shores of this New World. Hungarians who came here were either scientists, teachers, or travellers who wanted to know the New World. Many published articles and books about their experiences in America. The story of the new land reached even the most backward Austro-Hungarian provinces. Books and pamphlets were passed from hand to hand, the glorious War of Independence and the cause of liberty spread like a fever among the Hungarian poets and writers, inspiring the so-called "America-mania."

A second Protestant minister, the Rev. Gideon Ács, came to the United States after the unsuccessful War of Independence of Hungary in 1852. Louis Kossuth, Governor of Hungary, who was himself Lutheran, visited the United States in the hope that sufficient support could be gathered and the freedom of Hungary could be obtained. He gave a letter of recommendation to the Rev. Gideon Ács, just before he sailed back to Europe, in which he said: "I do testify, that the Reverend Gideon Ács, a Protestant clergyman from Hungary, having distinguished himself, by his patriotic zeal during our country's struggles for freedom and independence and by his devotedness in his quality of a Protestant field chaplain, was obliged to go into exile after our country's

immerited fall. Thus, one of the exiled band of Patriots, who sought and found asylum in Turkey, he amidst the sorrows and privations of exile administered assiduously the consolation of religion to the homeless emigrants, and when I and some others of my fellow refugees have been sent into detention to Kutahia, Asia Minor, he upon my request accompanied us spontaniously, as chaplain of the emigration sharing our detention to the last, till we all have been freed by the generous interposition of the United States and landed in this asylum of the oppressed."

Kossuth praised the Rev. Gideon Ács's virtues, his modesty and unassuming manners, his zeal and untiring devotion in his duties, his tolerance towards others as a good minister of the Lord.

There was no organized church life among the Hungarians. They scattered in every direction in this great country. Some went as far as Iowa and built a place called New Buda, others had to find suitable vocations to support themselves. The Rev. Gideon Ács' work in caring for the spiritual needs of his countrymen must have been extremely difficult.

László Károly wrote this in his diary: "on Sunday forenoon we went to a Hungarian church service. These church services were made possible by the generosity of an interested New York lady, who gathered together several likeminded women and collected enough money to pay Gida Ács $200 quarterly. He held services in the Hungarian language for all Hungarian immigrants in a German Protestant Church. There were regularly 50-60 people in attendance, among whom were Miss Day and several English and German women."

When the interest was ebbing, apart from his Christian work, he had to lend a helping hand to the "Magyar Exiles' Paper" (Magyar Számüzöttek Lapja). Gradually as Kossuth's memory was fading, church attendance decreased and members of the congregation scattered. The Rev. Gideon Ács accepted the hospitality of George L. Stearn of Boston, Mass. He later worked in a photographic shop. In 1860 he left the United States, never to return again, and died in Csuza, Hungary, after having served the Hungarian Reformed Church there.

III.

Immigrants started to pour into America after the Civil War. The waves of immigration came from the northern and eastern part of Hungary and gradually, by the turning point of the century, emigration from Hungary reached its height. Between 1861 and 1868 there were 479 immigrants who came from Hungary. Between 1869 and 1878 there were 4,970, from 1879 to 1888 the number increased to 99,647 and from 1889 to 1891 the total was 61,395. As the period of emigration waves continued year after year, the number doubled and multiplied. The officials of Hungary were not seriously

disturbed by the mass emigration and as a matter of fact, the exodus of the landless poor people was tacitly encouraged.

The next Hungarian Reformed clergyman, who came to America in 1881, was the Rev. Francis Kecskeméthy. He arrived at the invitation of the New York Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the USA. By that time, as one may gather, there must have been a good number of Hungarians in the ever growing metropolis, New York City. He held his first service on September 15th 1881 in Union College, later in Cooper Institute, which became the regular place of worship for the Hungarians.

With the support and aid of the Presbyterian church, the Rev. Mr. Kecskeméthy was able to carry on his work. Due to the lack of interest and the problems of city life, church attendance did not increase. As time went on he saw the fruitless result of his labors and after two and a half years he decided to return to Hungary. His life, his work and efforts in the homeland became enriched by the experiences he had aquired in New York City. He served faithfully in promoting Sunday School, youth movements and the mission spirit of the church.

One must give credit to the Presbyterian Church for the start of missionary work among Hungarian immigrants, for she was the first among the various Protestant denominations to feel this responsibility. Eveh before the Reformed Church of Hungary, the Presbyterian Church worked not only among Hungarians but other nationalities as well.

IV.

THE FIRST PERMANENT CHURCHES ORGANIZED

As more and more immigrants arrived, the need for their spiritual care became evident. They gathered together to sing the ancient Calvinistic Psalms and held prayer meetings in each other's homes. As the great Christian holidays approached, they wanted to celebrate Holy Communion.

First the people who came from one village or county sent letters back to their own teachers and ministers asking them either to come or send suitable men to work for the Hungarian immigrants in America. The people indeed seemed to the American Protestant pastors as "sheep without a shepherd".

Most of these early immigrants settled in the East near the large industrial cities: New York, Philadelphia, Pa., Trenton, N. J., Bridgeport, Conn., South Norwalk, Conn., Pittsburgh, Pa., Cleveland, Ohio, Chicago, Ill., and Detroit, Mich. Most worked as unskilled laborers in steel mills, coal mines and factories. The wages were better than in Hungary, the standard of living was higher, and they found conditions agreeable for they stayed longer than they actually planned to.

The demand for ministers arose when some wanted to get

married, others wished to have their children baptized or their dead buried. Often those who spoke German turned to the pastors of the Reformed Church in the U.S., most of whose ministers spoke the German language. These churches opened their doors to the Hungarian immigrants. For example, the pastor of Connellsville, Pa., learned the Magyar language in order to preach to the Hungarians.

Letters and petitions went to Budapest, Miskolc and Debrecen, Hungary, from the classes and the General Synod of the Reformed Church requesting one or more "faithful pastors able to officiate in the Hungarian and the German language, who shall labor as itinerant missionaries among the Hungarians and Germans."

This correspondence and selection of suitable clergymen consumed a great deal of time. Nevertheless, the Reformed Church in the U.S. was the denomination that helped to bring into existence the first permanent Hungarian Reformed Churches in America. On October 12, 1890, the Rev. Gustav Jurányi arrived in Cleveland, Ohio, where he held the first Hungarian divine worship service in the West Side Church. After the necessary orientation he began to gather together the scattered Hungarians and organize them into a regular congregation. This church work was transferred from the West to the East side and on May 3rd 1891, the charter of the church was secured under the name of "The Hungarian Evangelical and Reformed Congregation of Cleveland, Ohio". Cleveland still remains the largest Hungarian Reformed center in America, where three Hungarian Reformed Churches flourish.

In July 1891, the Rev. John Kovács arrived in Pittsburgh, Pa., to work among the Hungarian immigrants. Because of the active lay leadership the church was organized in 1890 with the chartered name: "The First Slovak Magyar Evangelical Lutheran and Reformed Church, St. Paul. Pittsburgh, Pa.". Here the first American Hungarian Reformed church edifice was built in 1892. The Rev. John Kovács left the U.S. for Canada to continue mission work among the Hungarian settlers there, and the Rev. Francis Ferenczy, accepting the invitation of the General Synod of the Reformed Church, came to Pittsburgh, Pa. from Hungary.

The organization of the third permanent Hungarian Reformed Church in America in South Norwalk, Conn., seems typical of many others. Lay leaders and elders conducted hymn-singing and worship services and the people insisted that their former schoolmaster in Hungary, Mr. Gabriel Dokus, should come to America and be their spiritual leader. Mr. Dokus came and after a period of successful work was examined and found duly qualified to be a minister. The New York Classis licensed and ordained him to preach and minister to the congregation.

On September 23rd 1894 some Reformed people met in the Greek Catholic Club in Trenton, N. J., and set forth their purpose:

"The Reformed Magyars in Trenton N.J., feel the necessity of forming a society in order to build a church." The Rev. Gustav Jurányi was transferred by the Board from Cleveland, Ohio to Trenton, N.J., but a year later he returned to Hungary. The Trenton Church became the center of many important events. In 1896 the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America was organized here and in 1923 the Free Magyar Reformed Church leaders met here to chart the course of an "independent" Hungarian church in America.

On September 15th 1895, two new Hungarian ministers arrived in America, the Rev. Bertalan Demeter and the Rev. Alexander Kalassay. The former stayed in New York City, where four Hungarian Reformed churches are active today, and the latter left for Mount Carmel, Pa., where the Hungarian Reformed Church has since ceased to exist.

It is dififcult to visualize the numerous problems, hardships and handicaps, that these first churches endured.

V.

THE WORK OF THE HOME MISSION BOARD OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.

The flood tide of the Hungarian immigration reached its high water mark between 1895 and 1905. The gates of America were wide open to these immigrants and their best friends were the Christian churches. Among the other denominations, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was fully aware of the great opportunities of rendering service at the time when it was most needed. Individual pastors responded to the challenge wherever the need for ecclesiastical services presented itself. The Rev. Ferdinand von Krug of the Presbyterian church in Kingston Pa., later superintendent of Mission in his Presbytery wrote: "as far back as 1897, I gathered Hungarians into my church. Having heard that they belong to the Reformed Church of Hungary, and were without a shepherd, strangers in a strange land, I felt it my duty to do something for them."

One of the first aggressive organizers of Hungarian Presbyterian work was the Rev. Julius Hámborszky, who was a teacher and lay preacher in a Lutheran church in Transylvania, Hungary. He served, under the care of the Lackawanna Presbytery, first among the Slovaks, then among the Hungarians. He played an important role in bringing dr. Géza Kacziány, a Professor of the Royal Commercial Academy, to the shores of America. They were both ordained by the Presbyterian Church.

The Harsányi brothers also must be mentioned: Alexander, Ladislaus and Steven, the latter was a physician and was of great help in establishing Hungarian churches here.

The minutes of the various Presbyteries tell interesting stories of how the Home Mission Board tried to help Hungarian immi-

grants. In 1899, the number of Hungarian Reformed people in Troop Pa., so impressed the leaders of the Presbyterian churches, that soon the "Logan Memorial Church" was dedicated for the worship of the Magyars (1903). The Rev. Samuel C. Logan, a great friend of the Hungarians, became known as the "Father of Hungarian Missions."

The Magyar Presbyterian Churches in Newark N.J., New Brunswick N.J., Perth Amboy N.J., were organized in 1903. Soon The Bloomfield Theological Seminary opened its gates to the Hungarian students: Arthur Gaskill Kovács, Sigmund Pilinszky, Rudolf Pompl, and Louis Bogár, who were the first Hungarian students there. They helped to organize more new Hungarian churches: Youngstown, Ohio; Wharton; Elizabeth; and Alpha, N.J. More ministers were brought over from Hungary to labor: The Rev. Joseph Kozma, Rev. Julius Hankó, Rev. John Ujlaky, Rev. Charles Dézsy and others.

The work of the Presbyterian church was carried on with great zeal. The people were ready and willing to be organized into regular congregations, but often there were no available ministers.

VI.

As the churches were organized more and more pastors were brought over from Hungary by the Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, there seemed to be a need among the congregations of each denomination to organize a Hungarian Classis, where they could deal with mutual problems. The attempt to have a Hungarian Classis within the Reformed church failed, while in the Presbyterian Church it was not even possible to discuss this matter, since all Hungarian congregations had to belong to the Presbyteries where they were geographically located. The congregations in the Reformed Church questioned those who were affiliated with the Presbyterian Church, saying, that the two were not the same, that there was a difference between the two denominations. The relationship between the two groups became worse each year. The Reformed people asked the Presbyterians why the Hungarian inscription on the cornerstone of the Kingston Pa. church read, "The Magyar Ev. Ref. Church" while the English text read "The Presbyterian Church." Each group was jealous of the accomplishments of the other. Each sought the solution to its own advantage. They decided to turn to the Reformed Church of Hungary for guidance and direction. The discussions went on and on and soon the debates turned from the theoretical and doctrinal level to the personal.

Count Joseph Degenfeld, Chief-Lay-Curator of the Trans-Tibiscan Synod was sent to America by the Church of the Homeland and he arrived in March 1904. He visited the Home Mission Board representatives and talked to the various church leaders, but instead of bringing the two opposing groups together into one church organization, a new group under the name of "The American Hun-

garian Classis of the Reformed Church of Hungary" was formed by him and the representatives of six churches. The mother Church thought that both German Reformed and Presbyterian church group leaders should join the American Classis, where unity was intended to be achieved. However, it did not work out that way.

Some churches from both sides joined the American Hungarian Classis, where autonomy and Hungarian church laws ruled, but most of them remained faithful to their Home Mission Boards. Nevertheless, the Hungarian Classis of the Reformed Church of Hungary slowly grew. The few churches which formed the Classis gained favor with the people and other church leaders. Soon new churches were formed and their number increased to 10. This group became the strongest and at the end of the First World War there were 32 churches in two classes. Help and support for the new churches and salaries for the pastors were provided by the home Church from Budapest. This American Hungarian Classis brought new life and vigor into many congregations. Fresh impetus, new zeal and certain nationalism became characteristic in their life. The Rev. Zoltán Kuthy, Dean in New York City, was one of the most outstanding figures of this great work. These churches had all the adventages, for the customs, laws and constitution were the same as in the Church of the homeland.

VII.

As the time of the First World War approached, the Hungarian Reformed Churches were active and their ministers busy with the expansion of their work. Leaders from large cities, as Cleveland,O., Pittburgh, Pa., Trenton, N.J., Bridgeport, Conn., etc... were going from town to town visiting small industrial settlements and mining areas, wherever Hungarians lived. Some of the small mission stations became self-supporting churches and all three groups reported considerable progress.

During the early years of the war, the congregations experienced no hardships or handicaps. The Home Church from Budapest sent the usual help for the pastors and churches under her care. There were no "peace societies" or "pacifists" in the Hungarian Reformed Churches as one can point to in several American denominations. The sentiments of the people were with the cause of their homeland. Volunteers left for Hungary to fight. The government of the United States had no objection with the church work of the immigrant people and these activities were carried on unmolested until 1917. Then bitter antagonism and personal malice caused many misunderstandings. Those who worked under the Home Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church tried to cause trouble with the ones who worked under the German Reformed church and the Church of Hungary. All properties and buildings came under the Alien Property Custodian Service. Ministers and

church leaders were under the suspicion of being spies or traitors. Anonymous letters and denounciations coupled with the highly sensitive nationalistic feeling and anxiety brought difficulties. All communications with Hungary ceased. The financial assistance that some churches received was cut off. But the real hardships which disturbed the lives of the congregations everywhere were yet to come.

VIII.

Chaotic conditions developed right after the war of 1914-18. Those who labored in the two American denominations joyfully observed the difficulties of those who swore allegiance to the Reformed Church of Hungary. After the war, conditions in Hungary were extremely difficult. The church of the Homeland was not able to take care of her own wounds. Hundreds of thousands of her members were cut off from Hungary and given to the succession states, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Austria. The unjust "peace treaties of Trianon 1920" brought darkness, grief and mourning upon the Hungarians.

New ideas and trends developed in most churches. Some wished that all the congregations of the American Hungarian Classes join the Presbyterian Church, "For she is really and thoroughly American." Others, like Rev. Alexander Kalassay, Dean of the Western Classis, wanted all Hungarian Reformed Churches of the two classes to join the Home Mission Board of the German Reformed Church. The Rev. Zoltán Kuthy, Dean of the Eastern Classis, New York City, wished the Hungarian Reformed Churches to remain independent and form a Hungarian Reformed Church in America. While visiting Budapest he died unexpectedly, leaving this plan with no other capable leader.

Discussions and conferences were held in both Eastern and Western Classes. Committees were busy preparing reports and tentative agreements with the representatives of both Home Mission Boards. The customs, by-laws of the church, the property rights and privileges, and many other questions were at issue. Letters and special envoys went to Hungary requesting advice and proper guidance.

A tentative agreement was signed in Budapest on August 4, 1920, by the Rev. Arthur J. Brown and Rev. Ladislaus Harsányi on behalf of the Presbyterian Church; and by the Rev. Dr. James I. Good on behalf of the Reformed Church of the U.S.; and by the Rev. Dr. Dezső Baltazár, Bishop; and Count Joseph Degenfeld, Chief-Lay-Curator, on behalf of the Reformed Church of Hungary.

While this was going on in Europe, a special committeee "on recommendations for handing over the Hungarian Reformed Congregations in America" either to the Presbyterian or to the Re-

formed Church, had many important meetings and decisions: May 19, 1920, in Reading, Pa. (St. Paul Reformed Church), September 20, 1920 in Philadelphia, Pa., September 23rd in Johnstown, Pa., and on October 11, 1920 in Grace Church Pittsburgh, Pa. After long discussions and plans, on October 7, 1921, at Tiffin, Ohio, the so-called TIFFIN AGREEMENT was accepted, according to which the Hungarian churches would be cared for by the Reformed Church in the U.S. Dr. Géza Takaró, and Dr. Alexius Boer plenipotentiary representatives of the Church of the Homeland, did much in writing and talking to all church leaders and members. There were many advantages in the Tiffin Agreement, but some leaders objected to the idea that they must "comply with the requirements of the constitution of the Reformed Church in every respect," and that this union of the Hungarian Churches would be "organic, legal, and ecclesiastical"; thereby forgetting entirely the ancient rules, customs, and constitution of the Hungarian Reformed Church. Dr. D. A. Souders and Dr. C. E. Schaeffer worked very hard to complete this agreement.

The General Synod of the Reformed Church in 1923 gladly acknowledged the 28 Hungarian churches received since the Tiffin Agreement, saying that: "through the transaction the Reformed Church has come into legal possession of more than one million dollars worth of Church property."

Those who did not like the transfer of so many Hungarian churches, called the Tiffin Agreement the TRIANON of the American Hungarian Churches.

IX.

THE EPISCOPAL MOVEMENT

Those who opposed the Western Classis and its recommendation to join the German Reformed Church, especially, in the East, engaged themselves in discussions with the Episcopal Church leaders. Articles and pamphlets appeared proving the historical connections of the Church of England and the Reformed Church of Hungary, also showing the similarities of the two denominations. The Rev. Louis Nánássy, Perth Amboy N.J., became the leader of these churches and worked out the plans to join the Protestant Episcopal Church. After long preparations and debates, mostly through the generous cooperation and understanding of the Rev. Northey Jones, Rector of the St. Peter's Episcopal Church of Perth Amboy N.J., the Hungarian Reformed and Episcopal Church representatives signed the so-called PRINCETON AGREEMENT on October 19, 1921. Twelve clergymen and 16 lay representatives were present from 14 Hungarian Reformed Churches; eight of these took formal action in favoring the agreement: Rev. Aladár Jezerniczky of Mount Carmel Pa., Rev. Joseph Nagy of South River, N.J., Rev. Kálmán Kovácsy of Phoenixville Pa., Rev. Dr. Adam Schodle

of New Brunswick N.J., Rev. John Ambrus of Roebling N.J., Rev. László Szabó of Franklin N.J., Rev. John Murányi of Philadelphia Pa., Rev. Kálmán Tóth of Kreischerville S.I., N.Y., and the Rev. Dr. Louis Nánássy of Perth Amboy N.J. The following representatives of the Episcopal Church signed the agreement: Bishop Matthews of New Jersey, Bishop Talbot, Chairman on the Commission of Church Unity, Bishop Jett of S. Virginia, Dean Baker, Arch Deacon Stepherd, and the Rev. N. Jones as Secretary.

The agreement assured the Hungarian churches of their own rights and customs, electing their own "deans", keeping their liturgy and maintaining the confessional standards of the Heidelberg Catechism and the Second Helvetic Confession.

Besides all the good will and manifold efforts of the clergy, the Episcopal movement suffered shipwreck because of the conservative, puritan and Calvinistic church members. The Hungarian Reformed Church has the office of "bishop" and "dean" to supervise the classis or Synod in a given geographical area, but the Episcopal Church is quite different from the Hungarian Reformed Church. The apostolic succession of the bishops and the fact that the Hungarian clergy had to be re-ordained, and confirmation could be performed only by bishops, so shocked the Hungarian church members that they forced their leaders to sever all connections with the Protestant Episcopal Church in America. The last church, which remained affiliated with the Episcopal church until 1932, was Franklin, N. J.

X.

THE FREE MAGYAR REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

Bitter arguments raged among the Hungarian Churches and their leaders during the period following the first World War. Theological questions, dogmatic and various difficult ecclesiatical matters were thrown before the lay people, who did not understand them. One danger, before the eyes of all, was that the old ancient and historical Reformed Church laws and customs were about to be changed. Pastors resigned, churches became the places of turbulent and stormy mass meetings, families were divided and many incurable wounds were inflicted on all sides.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Endre Sebestyén, pastor of the Duquesne, Pa., church, the flag of the "Free" Magyar Reformed Church in America, was unfurled. He wrote articles concerning all these problems in his weekly paper, THE MAGYAR CHURCH (Magyar Egyház), which he founded in 1922. Meetings and conferences were arranged with like minded leaders. In Trenton N.J., on August 13-14, 1923, definite action was taken for an independent church to be organized.

The constitutional assembly of seven Hungarian churches gathered together on December 8th, 1924, in Duquesne, Pa., where the

proposed by-laws were accepted and the constitution of the Reformed Church of Hungary was applied with necessary changes for American church life. The following ministers and delegates represented the 7 churches: The Rev. Endre Sebestyén and Balázs Morvay Duquesne, Pa., the Rev. George E. K. Borshy and Mr. Louis Koos and Mr. Mihály Tóth McKeesport, Pa., the Rev. Louis Nánássy and Mr. Stephen Bodnár Perth Amboy, N.J., The Rev. Charles Vincze and Mr. Louis Kovács Carteret N.J., the Rev. Michael Kovács and Mr. Charles Farkas Detroit, Mich., Scranton and Donora Pa. These churches, of course, had been founded much earlier and each one of them had a vigorous church program.

Mr. Steven Bodnár, the first chief-lay-curator of the Free Magyar Reformed Church in America, wrote in the February issue of the Magyar Church in 1925 concerning the organization of this new denomination: "Our hearts cannot deny the faith of our fathers, not even here in America, but desire to grow in our ancient faith. This faith nurtured us in the belief that the church should support herself, out of her own strength and sacrifice, as our forefathers founded and built the church, out of their own strength and made it great. This faith taught us never to walk with the crutches of others but to walk on our own feet. This faith teaches us self esteem, that we should show that there are still Hungarian Reformed people in America, even if only a few, who do not wait for the help of strangers, do not wait for the American Dutch and German bretheren to maintain the church for the Reformed Hungarians. The Reformed Church of Hungary armed us with such a strong faith that under no circumstances can we deny it."

The Rev. George E. K. Borshy, set forth the main tenets of this Free Magyar Reformed Church in his stimulating and much debated book: THE ONLY WAY in 1931. As these independent churches grew in number, the original classis was divided into 2, the Eastern and Western Classes in 1929, and in 1959 another, the New York Classis was formed.

The Free Magyar Reformed Church in America is fulfilling an important role by representing the historic Hungarian Reformed Christianity before such organizations as the World Alliance of the Reformed Churches, holding the Presbyterian system of Government, (1951), National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (1958), and World Council of Churches (1959). The official name of the denomination was changed recently, the word "Free" was dropped and the new name now is "The Hungarian Reformed Church in America", the title of "archdean" was also changed to "bishop", which title has been used in Hungary for four centuries. The first bishop, the Rev. Zoltán Béky, pastor of the Trenton N.J., church was elected and installed in 1958.

XI.

The churches worked diligently to maintain themselves. The hardship was especially felt during the 1930-33 depression years. A new generation grew up, those who were born in America and their children, the third generation. Most of the second generation still spoke the language of their mothers, but the third and fourth generation spoke only English. Churches instroduced English services. Sunday School, young people work and much other organizational work is carried on now in most churches entirely in English.

Attempts were made between the two World Wars to unite all Hungarian churches in America. These gatherings in 1935-36 at Cleveland O., and Perth Amboy N.J., ended in failure. When the Rev. Alexander Daróczy was the archdean of the Free Magyar Reformed church (1939-45) these negotiations were revived and "an agreement for closer collaboration and organic union" on the Hungarian churches was prepared. Meetings on April 1st, 1940 in New Brunswick, N.J., April 3rd in Philadelphia, Pa., April 17th, 1947 Cleveland O., June 10th Carteret, N.J., July 1st Perth Amboy, N.J., and November 23rd, 1948 in Passaic, N.J., were all in vain.

There were significant events in the life of the Hungarian churches especially when in 1922 the chair of Hungarian Studies was established in Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa., by the Reformed Church in the U.S., where the Rev. Alexander Tóth worked faithfully preparing students for the Christian ministery until 1936.

From 1922 to 1929 the Dayton Central Theological Seminary also trained a few pastors. In 1939 another Hungarian chair was established in Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Ill., where the Rev. Barna Dienes, Rev. Dezső Parragh, and the Rev. August Molnár worked until 1959, when this was discontinued, because of the lack of interest and financial support by the Hungarian Churches in the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

The Reformed Church in the U.S. merged first with the Evangelical Synod of North America in 1934 and recently, the Evangelical & Reformed Church in the U.S.A. united with the Congregational Chistian Churches in 1957, thus forming the United Church of Christ. In 1939 the Hungarians were allowed to organize a Magyar Synod, with four classes, in which form the work is still carried on in the congregations.

XII.

THE BETHLEN HOME

It is wonderful to see how Almighty God worked among the Hungarian churches. While the various denominations had much misunderstanding, there was one point in which they all agreed, when they unitedly built the BETHLEN HOME, an institution for

the orphans and a home for the aged in 1921, at Ligonier, Pa. The greatest benefactor and helper in this charitable institution is the Hungarian Reformed Federation in America, a fraternal, sick- and death benefit insurance organization, comprising all Hungarian Reformed Churches in the U.S.A. Out of the first modest beginning when the Rev. Alex Kalassay was the superintendent, a beautiful and modern institution with a yearly budget of $150,000-developed. The gradual growth of the Bethlen Home during the time and service of the Rev. Dr. Louis Nánássy and Joseph Kecskeméthy was remarkable. The present Director is the Rev. Alexander Daróczy, under whose supervision great expansion and new fields of services were inaugurated.

SUMMARY

In the Magyar Synod of the United Church of Christ there are 50 regular congregations and 11 sister churches and smaller mission stations with 48 full time pastors and 21 others, (retired and on the roll). The official organ of the churches is the "Reformátusok Lapja": its editor was for many years the Rev. Alexander Tóth. The present editor is the Rev. Dr. László Harangi.

The total number of the Hungarian Presbyterian Churches affiliated with the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. is 23 and 4 smaller mission stations and sister churches. There are 20 full time pastors and 4 retired ministers on the roll. The Hungarian Presbyterians have no official newspaper to serve their congregations.

In the Hungarian Reformed Church in America (Free Magyar) there are 20 regular churches and 8 sister churches and smaller mission stations with 20 full time pastors and 11 others on the roll. The official newspaper of the denomination is the "Magyar Church": its editor is the Rev. Dr. Andrew Harsányi.

There are three Hungarian churches affiliated with the (Dutch) Reformed Church in America with 3 clergymen, and two churches and ministers in the Southern Presbyterian Church.

The total number of Hungarian Churches (Reformed) in the U.S.A. is 120 with 129 ministers. The 97 regular churches are served by 93 full time pastors.

What the future for the Hungarian Reformed Churches holds no one knows but God. The spirit of better understanding must spread far and wide. The desire for closer union among the leaders of the churches must be more evident. The adjustment of the congregations to American Protestant Christianity must be worked out. New fields can be opened for further development, others must be closed. May the name of God be praised for all that He has done through his people within the Hungarian Reformed Churches in the United States.

Dezso Abraham

Soli Deo Gloria!

AZ AMERIKAI MAGYAR REFORMÁTUS EGYESÜLET

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